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CRISIS IN GOLIATH

PART ONE OF SEVEN

QUASAR

PLUS!

DR. STRANGE

50 YEARS OF CAPTAIN AMERICA
1941 – 1991

WENDELL VAUGHN . . . THE FIRST EARTH MAN EVER APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. BONDED TO THE ENERGY-TRANSFORMING QUANTUM-BANDS THAT ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF HIS STATION, HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE TO DEFEND ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE FROM COSMIC EVIL! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . . QUASAR!

PROLOG:

UNKNOWN TO THE ASTRONOMERS OF EARTH, THE PLANET **SATURN** HAS A **COMPANION**, A CELESTIAL BODY WHOSE AREA SURPASSES THAT OF THE SEVENTH PLANET ITSELF.

THIS CELESTIAL BODY IS NOT, HOWEVER, A PLANET, MOON, ASTEROID, OR RING SYSTEM. THIS BODY IS **ALIVE** AND **SENTIENT**.

HIS NAME IS **KRONOS**, AND ONCE UPON A TIME, HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST GENERATION OF **ETERNALS**, AN EXPERIMENTAL OFFSHOOT OF THE HUMAN RACE WHOSE BODIES WERE DRIVEN BY COSMIC RATHER THAN CHEMICAL ENERGY.

WHILE KRONOS OBSESSIVELY PROBED THE SECRETS OF THE ETERNAL'S **LIFE FORCE**, THERE WAS A **MISHAP**-- AN EXPLOSION THAT SCATTERED THE SCIENTIST'S **MOLECULES** TO THE SOLAR WIND.

SINCE THAT DAY, SOME **FIVE THOUSAND YEARS** AGO, KRONOS'S BODY AND MIND HAVE BEEN **EXPANDING**.

REFUGEES

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AS HE EXPANDED, HIS BOND WITH OTHER LIVING THINGS GREW AS TENUOUS AS HIS PHYSICAL FORM, FOR IN ALL THE GALAXY THERE WAS NO ONE WHO COULD RELATE TO AN EXISTENCE SUCH AS HIS...

...OR SO HE THOUGHT. THREE YEARS AGO, AS TIME IS MEASURED ON EARTH, HE WAS DISABUSED OF THAT LONG-HELD NOTION...

WHAT IS THIS? A FIGURE... AS VAST AND NEBULOUS AS ME...?

I ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR PRESENCE, STRANGER! PLEASE TELL ME WHO YOU ARE!

I HAVE NO NAME ANYMORE, I'M AFRAID. AND YOU?

I AM KRONOS, ONCE AN ETERNAL OF TITAN TILL I EXPLODED. AND YOU?

HOW DID YOU COME BY SUCH AN EPHEMERAL FORM?

TREACHERY. BEINGS JEALOUS OF MY POWER FORCED ME TO HYPER-ENLARGE MYSELF.

YOU SEEM TO BE QUITE USED TO YOUR IMMATERIAL EXISTENCE. FOR ME, IT IS STILL VERY NEW. TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU DO? HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR BOUNDLESS TIME?

ONCE I HAD PAROCHIAL CONCERNS. I LOOKED AFTER MY PEOPLE, THE ETERNALS OF TITAN. IN ESSENCE BECOMING THEIR BENEVOLENT GOD...

THEN I BECAME BORED... MY ATTENTION BEGAN TO WANDER, AND I INADVERTANTLY ALLOWED A MONSTROUS EVIL TO BE BORN AT MY VERY BOSOM.

HIS NAME WAS THANOS, AND HE DECIMATED THE WORLD I HAD PUT UNDER MY PROTECTION. TOO LATE, I TOOK STEPS TO COUNTER HIS INSANE MACHINATIONS BUT THE DAMAGE HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE.

ULTIMATELY, THANOS PROVED TO BE HIS OWN UNDOING. HE HAS SINCE RETURNED TO PLAGUE THE UNIVERSE ANEW--HE IS IN FACT AT LARGE EVEN AS WE SPEAK--

--BUT I JUST CAN'T MUSTER UP THE INCLINATION TO CARE ANYMORE...

WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT ANYMORE? ANYTHING?

YES. I SPEND ALL MY TIME NOW SEARCHING FOR THE FACE OF... *INFINITY.*

I GLIMPSED HER *HAND* ONCE--MANY CYCLES AGO--WHEN A TINY *FRACTION* OF HER POWER WAS BEING TAPPED BY THE EARTH-GOD *ODIN**...

**THE FATHER OF THE MIGHTY THOR. SEE THOR #185.*

INFINITY--IS A *BEING?*

OH YES, SHE'S ONE OF THE *ABSTRACT ENTITIES* OF THE UNIVERSE... LIKE *ETERNITY, CHAOS,* AND *OBLIVION.*

I'VE NEVER *HEARD* OF THESE ENTITIES. WHO *CREATED* THEM? HOW DID THEY COME TO *BE?*

I DON'T *KNOW.* NO ONE I *KNOW* OF KNOWS. FEW BEINGS ARE EVEN *AWARE* OF THEIR EXISTENCES.

WHY IS INFINITY SO *INTERESTING* TO YOU?

WHY? BECAUSE SHE'S THE *BIGGEST* OF THEM ALL. THE *OLDER* I GET THE MORE MY BODY *DRIFTS APART.* SOME DAY I WILL DWARF THE *SOLAR SYSTEM*... THEN THE *GALAXY*... THEN THE *LOCAL GROUP*...

BUT EVEN AT THE RATE I'M GOING, I MAY NEVER *CATCH UP* TO HER--SO I WANT TO *SEE* HER...AFTER ALL, SHE DEFINES THE *VERY SPACE* INTO WHICH I EXPAND!

WAIT--WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?*

I HAVE *BUSINESS.*

PLEASE STAY A WHILE *LONGER.* I HAVEN'T HAD A VISITOR IN AGES.

I'M SORRY. I CAN'T. IF I *SEE* INFINITY, I'LL GIVE HER YOUR *REGARDS.*

THE SETBACK THAT RENDERED ME *DISCORPORATE* HAS BEEN A *BLESSING* BEYOND IMAGINING.

THANKS TO THIS TALKATIVE *BUFFOON,* I HAVE LEARNED OF LEVELS OF POWER EXISTING IN THE UNIVERSE BEYOND MY WILDEST *FANCIES.*

I HAVE PURPOSE, DIRECTION, *IMPETUS* ONCE MORE. I WILL SEEK OUT THESE *ABSTRACT ENTITIES,* STRIKE *ALLIANCES* WITH THEM, SEE WHO WILL LEND THEIR *POWER* IN MY CONQUESTS.

GET BEHIND ME, *THANOS.* I SHALL MAKE WHATEVER EVIL *YOU* HAVE WREAKED SEEM LIKE *CHILD'S PLAY...!*

TIME: THE PRESENT. PLACE: PROJECT PEGASUS, UPSTATE NEW YORK. THE PLAYERS: THE EX-SQUADRON SUPREME AND QUASAR...

C'MON, SPEC! YOU ALMOST GOT 'IM!

SPEC-TRUM! SPEC-TRUM! SPEC-TRUM!

DON'T LISTEN TO THEM, QUAZE. SPECTRUM'S HIT THE WALL!

HE'S HERE!

WHAT ARCKY SAY?

WHAM

YOU MISSED IT, EVERYBODY. I WON! I WON!

WHUH--

ARCANNA...? WHO'S HERE?

HYAAAH!

DOCTOR STRANGE. HE'S IN THE BUILDING, ON HIS WAY HERE.

HEAR THAT, QUASAR? THE DOCTOR'S MAKING A HOUSE CALL.

WHO STRANGE?

"THIS WORLD'S SORCERER SUPREME SHAPE."

THE COMPOUND IS RIGHT THROUGH THE DOOR, DOCTOR.

HELLO, DOCTOR. GUESS YOUR *ANSWERING SERVICE* FINALLY GAVE YOU MY *MESSAGE*, HUH?

YOUR MESSAGE? NO... I JUST *RETURNED* TO THIS DIMENSION, AND IMMEDIATELY SENSED SOMETHING *AMISS*, SOMETHING NOT FROM *THIS EARTH*...

...THE TRAIL LED ME *HERE*.

WELL, THE *EX-SQUADRON* HERE... *THEY'RE* NOT FROM THIS EARTH.

YES, THE SQUADRON... WE'VE *MET*.*

*IN DEFENDERS #112-114.

YOU *HAVE*?

HELLO, DOCTOR?

THAT *AURA*... IS THAT--?

YES, DOCTOR. *ARCANNA JONES*. BUT STRANDED IN THIS *DIMENSION* SEPARATED FROM MY *FAMILY*, I'VE DECIDED TO GO BY THE NAME *MOONGLOW*.

I SEE.

THIS UNEARTHLY *PRESENCE*, FELT-- IT'S *NOT* THE SQUADRON.

IT'S *NOT*?

NO, IT'S SOMETHING *EVIL*.

GOOD GRIEF--COULD HE BE TALKING ABOUT THE *COSMIC MENACE* MY *MENTOR* WARNED ME ABOUT?

ARE WE TALKING SOMETHING *MYSTICAL* HERE, DOC, OR--

FORGIVE ME FOR *INTERRUPTING*, QUASAR, BUT THE EIGHT OF US ARE MOST *IMPATIENT* TO GO HOME.

YOU SEE, DOCTOR, WE SOMEHOW ENDED UP ON *YOUR EARTH* A FEW *WEEKS* AGO, AND HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET *HOME* EVER SINCE.

REED RICHARDS TRIED HIS TIME MACHINE A FEW DAYS AGO. BUT IT WAS UNABLE TO RETURN US TO THE RIGHT *REALITY LINE*. YOU MAY BE OUR *LAST HOPE*.

A *DIMENSIONAL DISPLACEMENT SPELL*, HMM? WELL, SINCE I *AM* HERE, I'LL GIVE IT A *TRY*.

GATHER AROUND.

HOPE THIS DOESN'T TAKE *LONG*. I'M *DYING* TO GRILL STRANGE ABOUT THIS *THING* HE SENSED!

BYE, QUASAR!

IT'S BEEN *FUN!*

DON'T TAKE ANY WOODEN *QUANTUM-BANDS*, QUAZE!

SAY BYE TO *MARKAR!* FOR ME, OKAY?

SO LONG. YOU GUYS. COME *AGAIN* SOMETIME.

BY THE FORCE THAT MULTIPLIES AN IMAGE IN A MIRROR SHIFT THESE EIGHT BACK FROM WHERE THEY STAND BACK TO THEIR NATIVE SPHERE!

WHAT--

DOC, TELL ME I'M *SEEING THINGS!* TELL ME *HALF* THE SQUADRON ISN'T *MISSING!*

THIS SHOULDN'T HAVE *HAPPENED!* THEY'RE EACH STUCK *MIDWAY* BETWEEN DIMENSIONS!

WELL THEN, EITHER *PUSH* 'EM THROUGH OR *PULL* THEM BACK!

I'M *TRYING*... BUT SOMETHING'S *JAMMING* MY SPELL FROM THE *OTHER END.*

IS... IS THERE ANYTHING *I* CAN DO?

YES. I CANNOT MOVE FROM HERE LEST THEY LOSE THEIR *TOUCHSTONE* WITH THIS REALITY. BUT I CAN SEND *YOU* INTO INTERDIMENSIONAL SPACE TO DEAL WITH WHATEVER *FORCE* HAS THEM SHIFTED *OUT OF PHASE!*

WHAT?

WHOA-- THERE'S THEIR *OTHER HALVES!*

CAN'T SEE WHAT'S GOT THEM *STUCK,* THOUGH...

QUA--

HE--

MY *QUANTUM-BANDS* AREN'T GETTING A READING, EITHER.

GRAB ONTO MY *TOW ROPES,* PEOPLE--

--I'LL SEE IF I CAN HAUL YOU BACK TO YOUR *OTHER HALVES!*

I SENSE HE'S MADE *CONTACT!* NOW I CAN CANCEL MY *ORIGINAL SPELL!*

hulp.

HEY!

IT WAS *HIM*. HE DOESN'T WANT US *BACK* SO HE SET A *TRAP* FOR US AROUND OUR WORLD!

WHOT

UH... WHOEVER'S LYING ON MY *CAPE*, PLEASE GET OFF.

DR. LIGHTNER, OUR WORLD'S NEW WIZARD SUPREME.

YOU SEE, WHEN THE *OLD* WIZARD SUPREME DIED HE APPOINTED MY NEWBORN *SON BENJAMIN* TO BE HIS SUCCESSOR BUT BENJAMIN *EXCHANGED PLACES* WITH LIGHTNER IN ORDER TO SAVE OUR UNIVERSE FROM THE *MENACE* LIGHTNER HAD BECOME..*

*AS SHOWN IN THE **SQUADRON SUPREME** GRAPHIC NOVEL

NOW MY SON IS RETRACING THE *PATH* LIGHTNER TOOK THROUGH THE DIMENSIONS, RESTORING *SPACE* WHEREVER LIGHTNER HAD *CONSUMED* IT.

I COULD ATTEMPT TO *COMMUNICATE* WITH THIS WIZARD SUPREME...

...BUT ULTIMATELY I'LL HAVE TO RESPECT HIS *PROPRIETORSHIP* OVER HIS DIMENSION EVEN AS I WOULD EXPECT *HIM* TO RESPECT *MINE*.

JUST A *MINUTE*, DOCTOR -- YOU'RE TELLING US THAT WE'RE *STRANDED HERE* IN THIS DIMENSION OF YOURS CUT OFF FROM OUR *FAMILIES* -- AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO A *THING* ABOUT IT?!?

I'M SORRY. I RISK AN *INTERDIMENSIONAL* WAR.

WHO *CARES*T I JUST WANT TO SEE MY *MADDIE* AND *TINA* AGAIN!

I AM CUT OFF FROM *PHIL* AND ALL *MY CHILDREN* TOO, STANLEY. IT IS NOT *RIGHT* FOR US TO ASK HIM TO GO TO *WAR* FOR US.

THEN... WE'RE *TRAPPED* HERE *FOREVER*?

NO...ONCE MY SON IS THROUGH RETRACING THE PATH LIGHTNER TOOK, HE WILL END UP WHERE LIGHTNER *STARTED* FROM -- *HERE*, AT PROJECT: PEGASUS. *HE* WILL BE ABLE TO TAKE US HOME.

I'M SURE THE PROJECT WILL LET YOU FOLKS *STAY ON* HERE AS LONG AS YOU *WANT*.

AND AS QUASAR SEES THAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE AT THE PROJECT, HIGH ABOVE THE PLANE OF THE **SOLAR SYSTEM**, A FORMER NATIVE OF EARTH LEADS A RAGTAG CARAVAN OF STARSHIPS EARTHWARD...

JACK OF HEARTS? IT IS I ONCE MORE. HOW ARE YOU *HOLDING UP?*

I'M *OKAY*, SERGEI... I CAN MAKE IT.

GOOD. COMPARED TO THE DISTANCE WE HAVE *ALREADY* TRAVELED, WE HAVE NOT MUCH *FURTHER* TO GO.

BETTER CHECK ON THE *REST* OF OUR PASSENGERS, OKAY?

SOMETIME LATER, ON EARTH...

KEEP ME POSTED IF YOU LEARN ANYTHING ABOUT THAT *EVIL PRESENCE* YOU SENSED, OKAY, DOC?

AND THERE'S THE *SIGN OF THE FOUR.*

OFFICE, SWEET OFFICE.

AFTER AN INSTANTANEOUS CHANGE OF ATTIRE...

KAYLA -- WHAT'S WRONG? YOU HEAR FROM *MISS STECKLEY?*

YES. SHE'S IN *YOUR OFFICE.*

MY...

BLAST IT, I KEEP THIS DOOR *LOCKED!* HOW IN--?

MISS STECKLEY...?

IT'S LIKE SHE'S IN *SHOCK*, BOSS.

WHEN KAYLA AND I CAME BACK FROM LUNCH, WE FOUND HER *HERE*, SITTING IN YOUR ROOM.

WHAT *HAPPENED*, MISS STECKLEY? WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN* THE PAST TWO WEEKS?

I... I HAD A MINOR *MEDICAL EMERGENCY.* I'M OKAY NOW.

HM! I THINK YOU'D BETTER GO *HOME* TILL YOU FEEL BETTER.

NO... I WANT TO WORK.

I *INSIST.* COME ON.

WHOAAAA!

WHUMP

WHAAK

OH, NO -- THE *BOOKCASE!*

OH, MY GOD. I DIDN'T MEAN--

THE DOORWAY TO *EON'S CHAMBER*-- CAME *LOOSE*?!?

HEY!

WHSST

YOU'D HAVE BEEN *BOOKED* ON SUSPICION IF I HADN'T STOPPED BY. HA! SO, LIKE I CAUGHT THE *EFFECT*, BUT WHAT WAS THE *CAUSE*?

MISS STECKLEY JUST *FLIPPED* HIM, MIKE.

I'M SO *SO* SORRY...

NO HARM DONE. SO WHERE'D YOU LEARN TO DO *THAT*?

I STUDIED THE *MARTIAL ARTS* WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG.

WHO WOULD HAVE *GUESSED*?

I'M *SERIOUS* NOW, H.D.--I WANT YOU TO GO HOME AND GET SOME *REST*.

LET ME SEE YOU HOME.

NO. I'LL CATCH A *CAB*. SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.

WHAT WAS THAT BIG *THUMP* IN THERE.

I TOOK A *SPILL*.

MAN, IF SHE ISN'T THE *ODDEST* PERSON I EVER MET.

WHAT *HAPPENED* TO HER--WAS SHE *MUGGED*?

DON'T KNOW--SHE WAS VERY *VAGUE*.

SO WHAT BRINGS *YOU* UP HERE, MIKE?

MY *FEET*, AS USUAL. DON'T YOU REMEMBER, WE'RE GOING *APARTMENT HUNTING* TODAY?

OH, YEAH.

OH! I'VE GOT AN *UNCLE* WHO'S A *REAL ESTATE AGENT*. HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO *HELP* YOU GUYS.

AN HOUR LATER, ON PARK AVENUE...

WHY HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF THE OTHERS?

WHAT? EON...?

YES. WE ARE LINKED NOW, YOU AND I.

I... I KNOW.

I HAD TO LEAVE THEM... I'M NOT FEELING WELL.

ALL THE TIME I SPENT INSIDE YOU, NEGLECTING TO EAT, DRINK, OR SLEEP... IT'S TAKEN ITS TOLL ON ME PHYSICALLY, AS WELL AS MENTALLY.

IT IS IN OUR BEST INTERESTS FOR YOU TO RECUPERATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

YOU NEED TO KEEP QUASAR'S COMPANIONS UNDER CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE.

I KNOW.

IT IS ALL GOING TO HAPPEN SOON.

SO YOU TOLD ME.

LOOK. SIX HOURS TO MYSELF IS ALL I ASK -- TIME FOR A HOT BATH, ROOM SERVICE, AND SOME SLEEP.

SURELY THE COSMOS CAN WAIT TILL THEN.

DO NOT BE TOO SURE.

AND, FORTY BLOCKS UPTOWN, ON THE UPPER WEST SIDE...

SO... WHAT DO YA FELLAS THINK? A *BEAUT*, HUH?

WELL, IT'S DEFINITELY THE *BEST PLACE* YOU SHOWED US SO FAR, MR. GARFIELD.

MURRAY. CALL ME MURRAY.

ANYWAY, NOT TO PUT *PRESSURE* ON YA'S, BUT I'M SHOWIN' THE PLACE TO A COUPLE'A *MODELS* AT 4:30... SO IF YA WANNA KEEP *THEM* FROM SNAPPIN' IT UP...

WHAT DO *YOU* THINK, MIKE?

LET'S *TAKE* IT

AND AFTER THE PAPERS ARE SIGNED AND A CHECK IS WRITTEN...

WELL, LOOKS LIKE WE'RE *MANHATTANITES* AT LAST, BRO.

YEP.

SAY, IS SOMETHING *UP*? YOU'VE BEEN UNUSUALLY *QUIET* TODAY.

AAH. I'M STILL A BIT *BUMMED* ABOUT NOT BEING THE *FASTEST MAN ALIVE.**

*SEE ISSUE #17.

I'LL GET *OVER* IT.

I'M GONNA CALL *KAYLA*, TELL HER THE NEWS. MAYBE SHE'LL WANT TO GO OUT TO *CELEBRATE*. INTERESTED?

NAH. I'M GOING TO DASH OFF TO *OLYMPIA*, PACK UP MY GEAR...

LATER, Q-MAN!

THAT NIGHT, AT A POPULAR THIRD AVENUE EATERY...

SO HOW'D YOU AND MIKE *MEET* ANYWAY? HE JUST DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THE *TYPE* OF GUY I'D EXPECT YOU TO *HANG OUT* WITH.

WELL, WE MET *JOGGING*, ACTUALLY...

I CAN'T SAY I'M SAD HE HAD TO *BEG OFF*, WENDELL. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'VE BEEN WAITING TO HAVE A LITTLE *TIME* WITH YOU ALL TO *MYSELF*.

UH... *REALLY?!?*

DO YOU THINK IT'S WRONG FOR A *BOSS* AND A *SECRETARY* TO *DATE*?

WELL, NO... AS LONG AS THE SECRETARY DOESN'T, UH, FEEL *PRESSURED* OR ANYTHING.

I'VE HAD A *CRUSH* ON YOU SINCE THE DAY YOU *HIRED* ME, WENDELL.

I THOUGHT I WAS PRETTY *OBVIOUS* ABOUT IT, BUT... I GUESS *NOT*.

I EVEN BROKE UP WITH MY *BOYFRIEND* ON STATEN ISLAND, SO I MIGHT BE FREE TO SEE YOU SOCIALLY... WHENEVER. BUT YOU SURE DON'T LET A GIRL KNOW IF YOU'RE *INTERESTED* OR NOT.

I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU EVEN *LIKE* WOMEN. YOU *DO*, DON'T YOU? OR IS MIKE--

YES, I LIKE *WOMEN*, KAYLA--AND *YOU* IN PARTICULAR. I'VE JUST BEEN SO *BUSY* GETTING THE COMPANY OFF THE GROUND AND OTHER THINGS...

...I JUST HAVEN'T THOUGHT THAT MUCH ABOUT MY PITIFUL *SOCIAL LIFE*.

I WAS *HOPING* THAT WAS IT.

WELL, YOU KNOW THE SAYING. "ALL *WORK* AND NO PLAY...

WHAT--? MY *QUANTUM-BANDS*--?

OH..*NO*! SOMETHING'S JUST PENETRATED MY EARTH *SURVEILLANCE NET*--!

WENDELL, WHAT'S *WRONG*--? DON'T TELL ME YOU FORGOT ANOTHER IMPORTANT *APPOINTMENT*!

BLAST *BLAST* *BLAST*! THIS IS THE PART OF BEING A SUPER HERO I HATE THE *MOST*!

KAYLA... I'M REALLY *SORRY* BUT I HAVE TO *GO SOMEWHERE* UNEXPECTEDLY. I WAS ABOUT TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER *LAME EXCUSE* LIKE I DO SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK WHEN I HAVE TO RUN OUT OF THE OFFICE.

BUT AFTER THE WAY YOU *OPENED* UP TO ME TONIGHT, I JUST *CAN'T*. I WANT TO TELL YOU *THE TRUTH*. I WANT TO *EXPLAIN* WHY I HAVE SUCH MYSTERIOUS COMINGS AND GOINGS.

YEAH? GO ON...

LOOK AT MY *WRISTS*.

EVER HEAR OF THE NEW AVENGER... *QUASAR*?

I... THINK SO.

WELL, I'M *NIM*.

REASON WHY I HAVE TO RUN OUT OF THE OFFICE SO MUCH IS BECAUSE I'M ANSWERING *EMERGENCIES* ALL THE TIME. YOU SEE, I'VE BEEN APPOINTED PROTECTOR--

--UM, LET'S JUST SAY IT'S MY *JOB* TO BE ON THE *LOOKOUT* FOR EXTRATERRESTRIALS.

MY *QUANTUM-BANDS* HERE RESPOND TO THIS *ENERGY-NET* I'VE RIGGED AROUND THE EARTH, AND--

SORRY, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO GO INTO *DETAIL* RIGHT NOW. TELL YOU WHAT, I'LL *CALL* YOU TONIGHT IF I GET BACK SOON ENOUGH, *OKAY*?

HERE'S SOME *MONEY* TO PAY THE BILL. I'VE GOTTA *RUN*!

I'LL EXPLAIN *EVERYTHING* TO YOU LATER, I PROMISE, *OKAY*?

I'LL EVEN TAKE YOU *FLYING*, LIKE IN THE *SUPERMAN* MOVIE.

BYE!

WAS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE *FOOD*?

OUTSIDE...

THAT FELT GOOD. I THINK I DID THE RIGHT THING. TIME WILL TELL, I GUESS.

I MEAN, WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN? SHE BLABS TO ALL HER FRIENDS? POSSIBLE, BUT I DON'T SEE HER AS THAT TYPE.

MERCURY

MAYBE SHE STILL DOESN'T BELIEVE ME. I MEAN, ALL SHE SAW WAS SOME GLOWING BRACELETS APPEAR--AND I'M SURE THERE'S ANY NUMBER OF SLEIGHT-OF-HAND ARTISTS WHO COULD DO THE SAME TRICK.

MERCURY

MERCURY

WON'T BE HARD TO CONVINCE HER I HAVE SUPER-POWERS GIVEN A LITTLE TIME, THOUGH.

WAIT! WHAT IF SHE DOES BELIEVE ME AND SHE'S TOO WEIRDED OUT BY THE WHOLE BUSINESS TO WANT TO DEAL WITH ME ANYMORE?

IT COULD HAPPEN. EVEN THOUGH SUPER HEROES ARE FAMOUS, IT'S NOT LIKE GOING OUT WITH A MOVIE STAR.

FOR ONE THING, MOVIE STARS DON'T LAY THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK. AND SUPER HEROES NEVER APPEAR IN PUBLIC WITH THEIR CIVILIAN GIRLFRIENDS ON THEIR ARMS.

I MAY HAVE JUST SEVERELY SCREWED UP A BUDDING RELATIONSHIP.

WELL, GOTTA STOP THINKING ABOUT THAT NOW. I'VE GOT WORK TO DO.

AHA! THERE'S THE CULPRIT WHO RUINED MY NIGHT OUT!

HEY, THAT'S THE JACK OF HEARTS! I MET HIM A NUMBER OF YEARS AGO.

WHAT'S HE DOING OUT HERE? AND WHAT'S HE GOT IN TOW? BETTER SEND HIM AN AIR-BUBBLE AND ASK!

YO, JACK OF HEARTS! HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, PAL!

WHO--?

REMEMBER ME? THE NAME'S QUASAR. I'M ONE OF THE AVENGERS NOW. MIND TELLING ME WHAT YOU'RE HAULING EARTHWARD?

HEY, I'VE COME A LONG WAY AND I'M VERY TIRED AND I DON'T HAVE THE PATIENCE TO DEAL WITH OBSTRUCTIONS RIGHT NOW.

SO DO US BOTH A FAVOR AND GET OUT OF THE WAY.

SORRY, NOT UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHAT'S IN THOSE TINKERTOYS YOU'RE TOWING.

I TOLD YOU... I'M NOT IN THE MOOD FOR THIS.

YOU GOT TO THE COUNT OF THREE--

NOW LET'S NOT GET BELLIGERENT, JACKO--

THINK OF ME AS EARTH'S PASSPORT OFFICER, OKAY? I JUST WANT--

THREE! DON'T SAY I DIDN'T WARN YOU!

IS IT *ME?* WAS WHAT I WAS ASKING SO *OUT OF LINE?* I DON'T *THINK* SO.

THIS GUY'S GOT AN *ATTITUDE PROBLEM.*

STUPID--! I LET HIM HAVE IT WITH *BOTH HANDS*--NOW THE *RECOIL* IS SENDING ME CAREENING *BACKWARDS*--!

BROOSH

AHHK!

NO! I HIT A *PORTHOLE!*

SOME KIND OF *CREATURE* BLEW OUT OF THAT BREACH JACK MADE!

BETTER *SNAG* HIM AND A QUANTITY OF THE *ATMOSPHERE* HE WAS IN BEFORE IT ESCAPES!

SHOOTING AT *ME*--!

NOW *WAIT* A MINUTE, JACKO! WE HAVE *NO REASON* TO FIGHT-- AT LEAST THAT I *KNOW* OF. NOW LET'S JUST--

WHOUFF!

FAST, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT. MY FORCE-FIELD *PROTECTED* ME FROM 98% OF THE *IMPACT*, THOUGH.

STILL *SHAME* ON ME FOR LETTING HIM GET SO *DARN* CLOSE.

HAVE YOU *ANY IDEA* WHAT I'VE BEEN *THROUGH*!?

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT--

TRAPPED FOR GOD KNOWS HOW LONG ON THE *STRANGER'S* WORLD--

HE *WAS*? WAIT--IS HE ONE OF THE GUYS I SAW *ESCAPING*? THERE WERE SO *MANY*!

--NOT KNOWING WHAT WAS *REAL* AND WHAT WAS *SIMULATED*--

HE'S GOT ME BY THE *WRIST-BANDS*--PUMPING MEGAVOLTS OF *ENERGY* OUT OF *HIS* HANDS INTO *THEM*--!

--AND THEN THE LONG *TREK* BACK TO EARTH, TAXING THE *ZERO-ENERGY* COURSING THROUGH MY MUTATED FORM TO THE *LIMIT*--

LOOK, JACKO--I MEAN YOU *NO HARM*... I'M JUST DOING MY *JOB* TO MONITOR EARTH AGAINST *EXTRATERRESTRIAL THREATS*, OKAY?

HATE TO *SAY* IT, BUT IN YOUR CURRENT *MENTAL STATE*, YOU *QUALIFY*!

ONE WAY TO MAKE HIM LET GO.

?!?

OKAY, NOW LET'S--

HOO BOY.

GOT ME *POINT BLANK* IN THE CHEST.

BETTER *RIDE* THIS ONE OUT.

ALL RIGHT, I'VE BEEN PLAYING *PATTYCAKE* WITH THIS GUY LONG ENOUGH. THE *KID GLOVES* ARE OFF--

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING* TO ME?!?

NOTHING *PERSONAL*, JACKO! IT'S THE SAME THING I DO TO *EVERY* ENERGY-BASED OPPONENT I ENCOUNTER...

...I'M *DE-ENERGIZING* YOU!

NOOOOOO!

IT'S...MY... *LIFE*...*FORCE*...!

HMM. *THAT* NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE. WHATEVER ENERGY HE WIELDS IS SO *VITAL* TO HIS *METABOLISM*--

--I CAN'T TAP IT WITHOUT *KILLING* HIM!

JACK? YOU *OKAY?*

SORRY, GUY. DIDN'T MEAN TO PUT YOU ON THE *CRITICAL LIST!*

BETTER GET HIM TO *EARTH*-- HE MAY NEED *MEDICAL ATTENTION!*

CAN YOU HOLD ON FOR *TEN MINUTES*, JACK? MAY TAKE THAT LONG TO GET *DOWN* FROM HERE.

UH... JACK? CAN YOU *TALK?*

SHUT UP!

TZING *TZING* *TZING* *THUBB!*

UNK.

EXCELLENT WORK!

SERGE!...?

NOW QUICKLY--
FINISH HIM OFF!
CLOSE RANGE BLASTS TO HIS *TEMPLES* SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO DO IT.

YOU MEAN *KILL* HIM? I--*WHY?*

IF *YOU* DO NOT HAVE THE STOMACH TO COMPLETE THE TASK, THEN I *SHALL!* STAND BACK WHILE I *SHATTER* THIS FEEBLE SPHERE!

AND ONCE *QUASAR*'S OUT OF THE WAY, NOTHING CAN STOP US FROM MAKING OUR PRESENCE KNOWN TO *EON!*

YOU MUST NOT MISS NEXT ISSUE!

ASSAULT ON EON!